

Message Text

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43

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3608

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AMEMBASSY PANAMA

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 3268

E.O. 11652 - XGDS 3 1985

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, ES

SUBJECT: IG/ARA STUDY OF USSOUTHCOM TRANSFER

REF: STATE 164406

1. THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY ISSUE, WHETHER IN ITS BROADER ASPECTS OR THE NARROWER ONES SUCH AS THE US MILITARY PRESENCE OR THE LOCATION OF USSOUTHCOM, IS ORDINARILY NOT PERCEPTIBLE IN US/SALVADORAN RELATIONS. IT IS ONLY WHEN THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT APPEALS FOR SUPPORT IN ITS DISPUTE WITH THE US THAT THE GOES AND SALVADORAN MEDIA FEEL OBLIGED TO FOCUS ON THE PROBLEM, USUALLY IN A MANNER SYMPATHETIC TO PANAMANIAN ASPIRATIONS.

2. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OCCURRED AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING IN PANAMA EARLIER THIS YEAR; AND THE SALVADORAN REPRESENTATIVE'S REMARKS, APPROVED BY THE GOES, CLEARLY SUPPORTED PANAMANIAN VIEWS IN SIGNIFICANT RESPECTS, PARTICULARLY THE NEGOTIATION OF A NEW TREATY PROVIDCNG FOR A RESTRICTIVE US PRESENCE AND THE EVENTUAL RETURN OF THE CANAL ZONE TO

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PANAMANIAN JURIDICTION. BY IN-

REFERENCE WE MAY PRESUME THAT THE GOES' VIEWS ON THE LOCATION OF USSOUTHCOM AND THE NATURE OF OUR MILITARY PRESENCE ALSO SUPPORT, AT LEAST IN PRINCIPLE, THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THESE MATTERS. IN SUM, THE ISSUE OF USSOUTHCOM'S PRESENT LOCATION IS COMPLETELY EXTRANEIOUS TO US/SALVADORAN RELATIONS; AND IF, AT OUR OWN INITIATIVE, IT WERE RELOCATED IN THE US, IT WOULD PROBABLY AROUSE NEITHER PRAISE NOR CRITICISM FROM THE GOES OR SALVADORAN PUBLIC OPINION.

3. HOWEVER, THERE IS ONE ELEMENT IN THIS COUNTRY WHICH DOES HAVE A SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE US MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE AND THAT IS THE SALVADORAN MILITARY. IT HAS BENEFITTED FROM THE SCHOOLS AND OTHER MILITARY FACILITIES LOCATED THERE; AND IT HAS COME TO LOOK UPON THESE AS ENHANCING THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP RESULTING FROM PROLONGED ASSOCIATION OF US MILITARY FORCES WITH THEIR LATIN AMERICAN COLLEAGUES. IF USSOUTHCOM WERE MOVED TO THE US BUT THE SCHOOLS AND OTHER MILITARY FACILITIES REMAINED OPERATIONAL IN THE CANAL ZONE UNDER

A "PANAMA CANAL DEFENSE COMMAND" AND AVAILABLE TO THE SALVADORAN MILITARY, IT WOULD PRODUCE NO NOTICEABLE EFFECT ON THE LATTER. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE RELOCATION OF USSOUTHCOM MEANT THE REMOVAL OF ALL MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES NOT CLEARLY ESSENTIAL FOR AND DIRECTLY CONNECTED WITH THE DEFENSE OF THE PANAMA CANAL (E.G. SCHOOLS FOR TRAINING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS, IT WOOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF DECREASING THE CONVENIENCE AND INCREASING THE COST TO EL SALVADOR OF UTILIZING THEM IF THEY ARE RELOCATED IN THE US. IF THE SCHOOLS WERE CLOSED ALTOGEOHER IT WOULD BE EVEN LESS TO THE LIKING OF SALVADORAN MILITARY AND PROBABLY WOULD BE CONSTRUED AS ANOTHER SIGN OF WANING US INTEREST IN LATIN AMERICA. CONVERSELY, IF THE PANAMANIAN ARE CELEBRATING OUR REDUCED MILITARY PRESENCE WE COULD CERTAINLY EXPECT SOME MEASURE OF SYMPATHETIC RESPONSE FROM THE SALVADORAN MILITARY WHO WOULD RECOGNIZE OUR ACTION AS ACKNOWLEDGING OUR PLEDGE TO RESPECT THE NATIONAL IDENTITY AND SOVEREIGNTY OF A SISTER

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REPUBLIC IN CONFORMITY WITH OUR DESIRE FOR A MATURE RELATIONSHIP WITH LATIN AMERICA.

4. ON BALANCE, THE TRANSFER OF USSOUTHCOM TO THE US COMBINED WITH THE TERMINATION OF MILITARY TRAINING AND OTHER FACILITIES NOW AVAILABLE IN THE CANAL ZONE TO LATIN AMERICAN ARMED FORCES WOULD BE ONLY OF MARGINAL IMPACT AND WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO INDUCE THE SALVADORAN

MILITARY INTO PRESSURING THE GOES INTO POLICY CHANGES
DETRIMENTAL TO OUR INTERESTS IN EL SALVADOR. BUT THE
CURTAILMENT OR ELIMINATION OF TRAINING FACILITIES WOULD
CERTAINLY FORECLOSE A SIGNIFICANT AVENUE FOR ESTABLISHING
NLODE KIND OF RELAZUONSHIP BETWEEN OUR OWN MILITARY
AND THOSE OF EL SALVADOR WHICH MIGHT ENHANCE OUR
ABILITY TO PROMOTE OUR INTERESTS IN THIS COUNTRY.
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